

MANN KI BAAT – JANUARY 28,2018.

Speech of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi

My dear countrymen, Namaskar. This is the first episode of ‘Mann Ki Baat’ in the year 2018. Just a couple of days ago, we celebrated our Republic Day festival with gaiety & fervour. This is the very first time in history that heads of 10 Nations attended the ceremony.

My dear countrymen, Shriman Prakash Tripathi has written a rather long letter on the Narendra Modi App, urging me to touch upon the subjects he has referred to. He writes, “The 1st of February is the death anniversary of astronaut Kalpana Chawla. She left us in the Columbia space shuttle mishap, but not without becoming a source of inspiration for millions of young people the world over”. I am thankful to Bhai Prakash ji for beginning his long letter with the sad departure of Kalpana Chawla. It’s a matter of sorrow for all of us that we lost Kalpana Chawla at that early age, but her life, her work is a message to young women across the world, especially to those in India, that there are no upper limits for Nari Shakti the power of women. If one possesses the will & the determination, a firm resolve to achieve something, nothing is impossible. It’s a matter of joy that women in India are taking rapid strides of advancement in all fields, bringing glory to the Nation.

In our country, respect for women, their status in society and their contribution has proved to be awe inspiring to the entire world, since ancient times. There has been a long tradition of Vidushis... women exponents or women champions. Many Vidushis of India have contributed in composing the verses of the Vedas. Lopamudra, Gargi, Maitreyee...it's a long list of names. Today, we talk about ‘Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao’, ‘save the girl child, educate her’. But centuries ago, it has been mentioned in our ancient texts, in the Skand Puran :

दशपुत्र-समाकन्या, दशपुत्रान् प्रवर्धयन्

यत फलम् लभते म र्यः, तत् लभ्यम् कन्यैकेकया ॥

This means, a daughter is the equivalent of ten sons. The ‘Punya’ that you earn through ten sons amounts to the same earned through just one daughter. This underscores the importance that has been given to women in our society. And that is why, in our society, women have been accorded the status of ‘Shakti’. This woman power binds closely together society as a whole, the family as a whole, on the axis of unity & oneness. Be it the erudition of the Vidushis of the Vedic Period... Lopamudra, Gargi, Maitreyee; be it the learning & devotion of Akka Mahadevi or Meerabai, be it the governance of Ahilyabai Holkar or the valour of Rani Lakshmibai, woman power has always inspired us. They have always brought glory to the Nation.

Shriman Prakash Tripathi has further cited some examples. He writes that the flight of our courageous Defence Minister Nirmala Seetharaman in a Sukhoi 30 fighter plane is inspirational for him. He also refers to INSV Tarini, with an all women crew on board under the command of Vartika Joshi, which is currently circumnavigating the globe. Three braveheart women Bhavna Kanth, Mohana Singh and Avani Chaturvedi have become fighter pilots and are undergoing training on the Sukhoi- 30. An Air India Boeing jet with an all woman crew led by Kshamata Vajpayee flew from Delhi to San Francisco, USA and back. These are all women achievers. You are absolutely right. Today women are not just advancing in myriad fields; they are leaders. Today there are many

sectors where our woman power is playing a pioneering role, establishing milestones. A few days ago, Hon'ble President took an initiative. He met a group of extraordinary women who have achieved something significantly new in their respective fields. Women achievers of our country... the first female Merchant Navy Captain, the first female passenger train driver, the first female fire fighter, the first female Bus Driver, the first woman to set foot on Antarctica, the first woman to reach Mount Everest... 'First Ladies' in every field. Our woman power achieved extraordinary feats, breaking the age old shackles of social mores, creating new records. They proved that through perseverance, grit and a firm resolve, all kinds of obstacles and barriers can be broken & crossed, to chart out an all new path... a path that could act as a beacon of inspiration not just to their contemporaries, but for generations to come. It will infuse a fresh energy, newer enthusiasm into them. A book has been compiled on these women achievers, first ladies, so that, the entire country comes to know about the power of these women and derive inspiration from their life & work. This is also available as an e-book on the Narendra Modi Website.

The country's woman power has contributed a lot in the positive transformation being witnessed in our country & society these days. Today, as we speak of women empowerment, I would like to refer to a railway station. You must be wondering what a railway station has got to do with women empowerment. Matunga station in Mumbai is the first station in India which is run by an all woman staff. All departments have women performing duties... the commercial department, Railway Police, Ticket checking, Announcing, Point persons, it's a staff comprising over 40 women. This time, after watching the Republic Day Parade, many people wrote on Twitter and other social media that a major highlight of the parade was the BSF biker contingent comprising women participants. Daredevil stunts performed by them was awe inspiring for our foreign guests. Empowerment is another form of self reliance. Today our Nari Shakti is assuming leadership roles. It is becoming self reliant. By the way, this also reminds me of tribal women of Chattisgarh, who have done something extraordinary and set a remarkable example. When we refer to Adivasi women, a stereotypical image comes to our minds, comprising jungles, pathways in the woods and women carrying kindlewood on their heads. But the woman power of Chattisgarh, the tribal women there broke this stereotype & presented an all new picture of themselves. Dantewada in Chattisgarh is a Maoist infested region. Violence, torture, explosives, guns, pistols... the Maoists have created a scary reign of terror. In this dangerous atmosphere, Adivasi women are becoming self reliant by driving e-rickshaws. In a short span of time, a number of women have become part of this phenomenon. This has three benefits- on the one hand self-employment has empowered them; on the other, the Maoist infested region is witnessing a transformation. And simultaneously as a consequence, it is strengthening efforts towards protecting the environment. I laud the efforts of the District Administration which has played a significant role in the successful endeavour of these women by ensuring availability of grants & imparting training to them.

Time and again we keep hearing people utter 'There is something special that we as a people possess... no threat is big enough to annihilate our existence'. What is that 'Special Something'? That 'Something' is flexibility, the ability of transformation. Leaving out things that are beyond the constraints of time and accepting betterment in things wherever necessary. And this is a salient feature of our society... relentless efforts towards self-improvement, self correction. We have inherited this Indian tradition as a cultural legacy. The benchmark of any living society is its self correcting mechanism. In our country, there have been unending endeavours against social ills and

evil practices, both individually & collectively. Just a while ago, Bihar launched an interesting initiative. In order to uproot social ills in the state, the world's longest human chain spanning over thirteen thousand kilometers was formed.

This campaign made people aware of social maladies such as child-marriage and the dowry system. The entire state thus resolved to fight against these social evils. Children, the elderly, the youth full of energy and enthusiasm, women, girls turned out to participate in this battle. The human chain that commenced formation from Gandhi Maidan in Patna gained momentum, touching the state borders. In order to ensure that the fruits of progress rightly reach all sections of society, it is imperative that our society is freed of these ills. Come, let us pledge to come together to wipe out these evil customs from our social fabric... let us build an empowered, capable New India. I appreciate the people of Bihar, the Chief Minister, the administration, in fact every member of the human chain for this massive, special initiative towards social welfare.

My dear countrymen, Shriman Darshan from Mysore, Karnataka has written on My gov. He was undergoing an expenditure of six thousand rupees a month on medicines alone for the treatment of his father. Earlier, he wasn't aware of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana. But now that he's come to know of the Jan Aushadhi Kendra, he has begun purchasing medicines from there and his expenses have been reduced by about 75%. He has expressed his wish that I mention this in 'Mann Ki Baat', so that it reaches the maximum number of people and they can benefit from it. Over some time lately, many have written on this subject; many of them have been telling me about it. I too have seen videos put up on social media by beneficiaries of this scheme. It is a matter of joy learning about happenings like these. It gives you inner satisfaction. I felt good to see Shriman Darshan ji think about sharing with others what he gained from it. The motive behind this scheme is making healthcare affordable and encouraging Ease of Living. Medicines available at the Jan Aushadhi Centres are 50% to 90% cheaper than branded drugs available in the market. This is great help for the common man, especially for senior citizens who require medicines on a daily basis and results in a lot of savings. Generic medicines sold under this scheme strictly conform to prescribed standards set by the World Health Organisation. That is why good quality medicines are made available at affordable prices. Today, over three thousand Jan Aushadhi Kendras have been set up across the country. This has led to not only availability of cheaper medicines, but also new employment opportunities for individual entrepreneurs. Affordable medicines are now available at 'Amrit Stores' at Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Centres & at hospitals. The sole aim behind this step is ensuring availability of Quality & affordable health service to the poorest of the poor, so that a healthy & prosperous India comes into being.

My dear countrymen, Shri Mangesh from Maharashtra has shared a photo on the Narendra Modi Mobile App. It was such a striking photo that my attention was magnetically drawn towards it. The photo showed that a grandson was participating in the 'Clean Morna River' along with his grandfather. I came to know that the citizens of Akola had organized a cleanliness campaign to clean the Morna river under the 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan'. The Morna river was a perennial river flowing throughout the twelve months of the year but now it has become seasonal. The second painful fact was that the river was completely filled with wild grass and hyacinth. A lot of garbage was being dumped into the river and along its banks. An action plan was chalked out and on January 13th a day before Makar-Sankranti, in the first phase of 'Mission Clean Morna' sanitation of

the two sides of the bank of the Morna river at fourteen places spread over an area of four kilometers, was carried out.

This noble and grand task named 'Mission Clean Morna', involved more than six thousand denizens of Akola, more than 100 NGOs, Colleges, Students, children, the elderly, mothers, sisters, almost everybody participated in this task. On January 20th, 2018, this Sanitation Campaign continued in the same vein and I've been told that this campaign will continue every Saturday morning till the Morna river is completely cleaned. 'Mission Clean Morna' shows that if a person is determined to do something, then nothing is impossible. Huge social reforms can be brought about through mass movements. I congratulate the people of Akola, the district and the municipal corporation's administration, all the citizens who were associated with this mass movement, I laud your efforts which are not only very much appreciated but this will inspire the other citizens of the country.

My dear countrymen, these days you must be hearing a lot about the Padma Awards. These awards also attract attention in newspapers and television also. But if you scrutinize, then you will be proud of the fact that there many loftier personalities amidst us and you will naturally be proud of the very fact that today the common man is being cited for Padma awards without any recommendations. There was a certain methodology of awarding Padma Awards every year, but this entire process has been changed for the past three years. Now any citizen can nominate any person in our country. Transparency has been brought about in the entire process by making it operable online. In a way, the selection of these awards has been transformed completely. You may have noticed that many ordinary people not visible in big cities, in newspapers or on TV are being awarded with Padma citations. Now the identity of the awardee is not the deciding factor of the award, rather the importance of his work is increasing. You must have heard the name of Arvind Gupta ji. It will gladden your heart to know, that Arvind ji, a student of IIT Kanpur, spent all his life creating toys for children. He has been making toys from garbage for over four decades so that children can increase their curiosity towards science.

He has been trying to get children inspired to conduct scientific experiments using waste; towards this end he has been encouraging children by showing them films made in 18 languages in three thousand schools across the country. What a wonderful life, what a dedicated mission! A similar story is that of Sitavaa Jodatti from Karnataka. She has not been hailed as 'Goddess of women empowerment' just for nothing! For the past three decades, in Belagavi, she has made a great contribution towards changing the lives of countless women. At the age of seven she had dedicated herself as a Devadasi but in a turnaround, for the welfare of the Devdasis, she has spent her entire life. Not only this, she has done unprecedented work for the welfare of Dalit women too. You must have heard the name of Bhajju Shyam of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Bhajju Shyam was born in a very poor tribal family. He was employed in a small job for eking out his living, but he was also fond of painting in the traditional tribal art form. Today, due to this hobby, he garnered respect not only in India but the entire world. He has exhibited his paintings in many countries like Netherlands, Germany, England and Italy. The talent of Bhajju Shyam ji, who made India proud in many nations abroad, was also recognized and he was awarded the Padma Shri.

You will be pleasantly surprised listening to the story of Kerala's tribal lady Lakshmikutti. Lakshmikutty is a teacher in Kallar and still resides in a hut made of palm leaves in a tribal tract amidst dense forests. She has created five hundred herbal medicines relying solely on her memory.

She has mastery in synthesizing medicines used for treatment of snake bites. Lakshmi Ji is continuously serving society with her knowledge of herbal medicines. Identifying her anonymous persona, she has been honoured with the Padma Shri for her contribution to society. I would like to mention another name today, that of 75 year old Subhasini Mistri, hailing from West Bengal, who was selected for the award. Subhasini Mistri is a woman who, in order to construct a hospital, cleaned utensils in the homes of others and also sold vegetables. At the age of 23 she lost her husband due to lack of proper treatment, and this incident inspired her to build a hospital for the poor. Today, thousands of poor people are treated free of cost in this hospital that has come up through hard-work. I am convinced that there are many men and women in our land filled with gems, Bahuratna-Vasundhara, many gifted women and men who remain faceless or unknown. The failure to identify such people is also a loss to the society, the Padma awards are only a medium of acknowledgement, but I would also like to tell the countrymen that people serving the society around us, people giving up all that they have got for the sake of society, millions of people who have worked for a life time for us bestowed with one or the other useful attribute should be acknowledged in our midst. They do not labour for any honor, but their work inspires us. These people should be invited to schools and colleges to share their experiences. Beyond awards, there should be some more efforts from our society in acknowledging their contribution.

My dear countrymen, we celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on January 9th every year. It was on the 9th of January, when our revered Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa. On this day, we celebrate the unbreakable bond that exists between Indians in India and Indians living around the globe. This year we organized a program on Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, where all MPs and Mayors of Indian origin were invited. You will be pleased to know that in this programme, Malaysia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Portugal, Mauritius, Fiji, Tanzania, Kenya, Canada, Britain, Surinam, South Africa and America, and many other countries wherever our Mayors or MPs of Indian Origin exist, all of them participated. I am happy that the people of Indian origin who live in different countries continue to serve those countries and at the same time they have maintained their strong relationship with India as well

This time, the European Union, has sent me a calendar, in which they have displayed the contributions by Indians in various fields of life living in different countries of Europe; whether working in the field of cyber security, or dedicated to Ayurveda, entertaining the society through music, or through poetry; someone researching on climate change or working on ancient Indian texts, someone driving a truck for livelihood, who went on to construct a Gurudwara or has built a mosque – wherever our people are, they have in their own way embellished or adorned the land of their adoption. I would thus like to thank the European Union, for recognizing the people of Indian origin and through them in making people in India and people the world over aware of their exemplary work.

The 30th of January is the death anniversary of our revered Bapu, who showed us a new path. On that day we also observe 'martyrs day' in solemn memory of the great martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the defense of the country and pay our homage at 11 in the morning. The path of peace and non-violence, is the path of Bapu and this is applicable not only for India or the world, but also for a person or a family or a society. The ideals which Bapu practiced in his life, things that he imparted are relevant even today. They were not just mere theories. At present we witness at every step how

accurate Bapu's words were. What can be a bigger tribute than taking a vow that we shall tread the path of Bapu - and walk, as far as possible?

My dear countrymen, with my best wishes to all of you for 2018, my speech draws to a close. Thank you very much. Namaskar.